



Chris Danou's Capitol Report

Wishing You a Happy and Healthy Thanksgiving Holiday

It's hard to believe Thanksgiving is upon us and 2016 is just around the corner. While each Thanksgiving is a time to eat plenty, visit with family and watch football, Thanksgiving as we know it has its roots going back to Abraham Lincoln's presidency. In an effort to bring people together during the height of the Civil War, President Lincoln made Thanksgiving a national holiday in 1863.

In 1863, the country was deeply immersed in the Civil War and it seemed like the preservation of the Union and abolition of slavery was a lost cause. In July of that year, one of the bloodiest and historic battles of the Civil War took place at Gettysburg. It was there that President Abraham Lincoln went on to give a speech that is considered to be one of the best speeches in American history.

The next few months brought turmoil to the Union, including several brave regiments from Wisconsin, and in an attempt to uplift the spirit of the people, President Lincoln issued a proclamation to all Americans to ask God to "commend to his tender care to all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife" and to "heal the wounds of the nation." I can't help but be thankful so many brave men were willing to sacrifice their lives for the future of our country.

As your State Representative, I am reminded of Wisconsin's role in the Civil War every time I come to the Capitol in Madison. From rooms, to paintings and statues, it's clear our great state played a significant role in preserving our nation and guaranteeing basic freedoms for all people. Interestingly, most of Wisconsin's regiments were composed primarily of single ethnic groups: the 9th, 26th, 27th, and 45th were mostly German, while Norwegians filled the ranks of the 15th regiment. The 8th Wisconsin became known as the "Eagle Regiment" because of "Old Abe," the bald eagle they carried into battle at Gettysburg on a perch with an American flag. Old Abe is fondly remembered throughout the Chippewa Valley, and he even sits above the Speaker's chair in the chambers of the State Assembly.

Wisconsin soldiers fought and died in every major battle of the Civil War. By the time the war ended in 1865, 12,301 Wisconsin soldiers died, or about 13.4% of those who served. Clearly, Wisconsinites answered the call and made sacrifices not only for the people of our state, but for people in every state around the country.

Please remember this holiday is closely tied with the Civil War, and be thankful that with so much sacrifice from so many men, slavery was abolished and our Union was preserved. In this spirit, I believe it is important for us to remember the value of working together toward a greater good that allows others to have a chance at life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Indeed, Thanksgiving is much more than a big meal and a day off from work. It is a national holiday with a deep history in our country, and it allows us the opportunity to reflect on all the things for which we are thankful. Be sure to take a moment to remember everything that you have to be thankful for in your life.

